

Illinois Public Radio

Prisons May Get Two, Not Three, Meals A Day

BY BRIAN MACKEY



Illinois prisons are expanding a program to feed some inmates two meals a day instead of three.

The Illinois Department of Corrections has combined breakfast and lunch at two prisons so far.

Spokesman Tom Shaer says this is not a money-saving measure, but it is easier on the staff. In a prison, mealtime means not just preparation, serving and clean-up, but also moving inmates from their housing area to the dining hall.

Shaer also says inmates prefer the brunch schedule.

"There are some correctional centers that serve breakfast as early as 4 a.m. ... This is more palatable, I think, for the inmates, because it's a more conventional schedule and they're not going from cell to dining hall in the dark and cold of winter mornings," Shaer said.

And yet the prison watchdog John Howard Association has heard from inmates complaining about brunch at Illinois River Correctional Center in Canton. In a 2012 report, some prisoners said they weren't getting enough food, though prison officials say it's the same number of calories per day, whether in two meals or three.

An official from the union representing prison guards says they're on board with the concept.

Brunch will be rolled out at Western Correctional Center in the coming weeks, and at Jacksonville in the next few months.